

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

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FM AMEMBASSY KABUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8820

C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 5272

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, MARR, AF, US

SUBJECT: EMBASSY ATTACHE AIRCRAFT: PROBLEM ARISES

1. SUMMARY: AFGHAN FOREIGN MINISTRY HAS TURNED DOWN EMBASSY'S FIRST REQUEST FOR USE OF ITS BEECHCRAFT AND ASKS THAT WE PROVIDE A COPY OF THE ORIGINAL AGREEMENT GOVERNING STATIONING OF AN EMBASSY AIRCRAFT IN AFGHANISTAN. END SUMMARY.

2. AS THE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, WE HAVE IN KABUL AN EMBASSY ATTACHE AIRCRAFT, A BEECHCRAFT C-12. ACCORDING TO OUR SKIMPY RECORDS, IT IS AT LEAST THE FOURTH ATTACHE AIRCRAFT ASSIGNED HERE; THE FIRST HAVING ARRIVED ABOUT NOVEMBER 1966. FOR AT LEAST THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS, OUR ATTACHE AIRCRAFT HAS BEEN THE ONLY FOREIGN EMBASSY AIRCRAFT IN THE COUNTRY. THE SOVIETS HAVE NONE HERE.

3. WHEN THE PRESENT LEFTIST AFGHAN GOVERNMENT CAME TO POWER ON APRIL 27, WE IMMEDIATELY APPRECIATED THAT ONE OF THE MORE VULNERABLE PROGRAMS OR ASSETS WE HAD WAS THE BEECHCRAFT. AFTER MUCH DISCUSSION, WE DECIDED THAT NO ATTEMPT WOULD BE MADE TO USE THE AIRCRAFT UNTIL AMBASSADOR DUBS ARRIVED AND, IF HE CONCURRED, WE WOULD REQUEST AS OUR FIRST IN-COUNTRY TRIP, A FLIGHT TO THE HELMAND VALLEY TO ENABLE AMBASSADOR DUBS TO SEE THE
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AMERICAN USAID PROJECT AND CONTINGENT THERE.

4. SUBSEQUENTLY, HOWEVER, IT BECAME APPARENT THAT, FOR SAFETY SAFE, A PRACTICE AND PILOT PROFICIENCY FLIGHT WAS INDISPENSABLE BEFORE TAKING THE NEW AMBASSADOR ANYWHERE. FACED WITH THIS PROBLEM, I AGREED THAT WE SHOULD RAISE WITH SOME APPROPRIATE OFFICIAL THE QUESTION OF A

PROFICIENCY/PRACTICE FLIGHT IN THE KABUL AREA.

5. THE OPPORTUNITY PRESENTED ITSELF WHEN WE SECURED AN APPOINTMENT WITH THE DEFENSE MINISTER, MAJOR GENERAL QADER, TO INTRODUCE THE NEWLY ARRIVED AIR ATTACHE, LT COL CAVANAUGH. DURING THE CALL, WE EXPLAINED THE BACKGROUND OF HAVING AN EMBASSY AIRCRAFT HERE AND THE NEED FOR PERIODIC PROFICIENCY FLIGHTS. THE MINISTER, AN AIR FORCE OFFICER HIMSELF, SEEMINGLY UNDERSTOOD AND SAID WE HAD HIS PERMISSION TO PROCEED.

6. HEARTENED BY THIS INFORMATION, WE SUBMITTED ON JUNE 21 OUR STANDARD DIPLOMATIC NOTE REQUESTING PERMISSION TO MAKE A PROFICIENCY FLIGHT ON JUNE 28. A WEEK LATER, ON JUNE 27TH, WE RECEIVED A NEGATIVE REPLY. THE NOTE FROM THE FOREIGN MINISTRY SAID THAT "FOR THE TIME BEING" PERMISSION FOR THE FLIGHT COULD NOT BE GIVEN. WHEN OUR DEFENSE ATTACHE ATTEMPTED TO GET AN EXPLANATION FOR THIS FROM THE DEFENSE MINISTRY LIAISON OFFICE, THE RESPONSE WAS THAT THE NEGATIVE DECISION HAD COME FROM THE FOREIGN MINISTRY.

7. I THEREFORE ASKED FOR AN APPOINTMENT TO SEE DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER DOST. I SAW HIM ON JUNE 28, AND REVIEWED WITH HIM THE WHOLE CASE. HE WAS AWARE OF THE MATTER AND SAID THAT WE SHOULD NOT INTERPRET THE CONFIDENTIAL

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MINISTRY'S NEGATIVE RESPONSE AS NECESSARILY A PERMANENT ONE. THE KEY PHRASE IN THEIR NOTE, HE SAID, WAS "FOR

THE TIME BEING."

8. BEFORE MAKING A DEFINITIVE DECISION ON THE AIRCRAFT, DOST SAID THEY WOULD NEED TO EXAMINE THE ORIGINAL BASIC AGREEMENT GOVERNING THE STATIONING OF THE AIRCRAFT IN AFGHANISTAN. DOST WENT ON TO SAY THAT WHEN HIS MINISTRY PEOPLE HAD TRIED TO FIND IN THEIR ARCHIVES A COPY OF THIS AGREEMENT, THEY COULD NOT EVEN FIND THE FILE. HE APOLOGIZED, BUT EXPLAINED THAT THEIR FILING SYSTEM WAS VERY DEFICIENT. HE SAID THAT, CONSEQUENTLY, HE WOULD MUCH APPRECIATE IT IF WE COULD SUPPLY TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY A COPY OF THE APPLICABLE BASIC AGREEMENT.

9. I TOLD HIM THAT OUR EMBASSY FILES ONLY GO BACK A FEW YEARS AND THAT WE HAD SO FAR NOT BEEN ABLE TO LOCATE A COPY OF THE ORIGINAL BASIC AGREEMENT. WE HAD FOUND, HOWEVER, A COPY OF THE "AGREED GUIDELINES," DATED OCTOBER 19, 1976, FOR OPERATION OF THE AIRCRAFT, WHICH HAD APPARENTLY BEEN HANDED TO AND APPROVED BY

THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS, SAMAD GHAS. (THE GUIDELINES PAPER DID NOT, HOWEVER, CITE THE DATE OF ANY ORIGINAL BASIC AGREEMENT.) I GAVE HIM A COPY OF THIS AND SAID THAT WE WOULD SEARCH FURTHER AND, IF NECESSARY, ASK WASHINGTON TO CHECK THEIR FILES.

10. REQUEST: PLEASE SEARCH THE DEPARTMENT'S FILES, PARTICULARLY IN THE PERIODS ABOUT NOVEMBER 1966 AND THEN IN 1973, TO SEE IF A WRITTEN AGREEMENT WAS RECEIVED FROM THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT ON THIS. I CITE 1973 BECAUSE WE HAVE CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE THAT AT SOME POINT AFTER 1966 WE WITHDREW OUR AIRCRAFT AND THEN AFTER A GAP REPLACED IT IN 1973. I FEAR THAT UNLESS WE ARE ABLE TO
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PRODUCE A WRITTEN AGREEMENT FROM THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT, IT MAY NOT BE POSSIBLE TO CONVINCE THE AFGHANS TO LET US KEEP THE AIRCRAFT.
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